

# Welcome Home 123<sup>rd</sup>

**W**ORDS OF WELCOME are entirely inadequate to express the feeling that Rock Island owes toward its returning soldiers. No mere formalities can convey the love, the gratitude, the pride and the joy over their safe return that swell in every breast. Words and forms, in fact, are unnecessary on such an occasion. What people feel so strongly, shows involuntarily in their faces and in every movement. Looks and actions tell the story fully and adequately where speech fails.

The demonstration for Battery F and other units or individuals who fought with the One Hundred Twenty-third field artillery across the sea will be meant to convey what is in the hearts of all the people.

Necessarily addressed particularly to the men just coming home, it will in fact be typical in its nature, for it will carry the sentiment that prevails toward all boys who have gone out from Rock Island, whether to training camp or to battlefield, serving here or abroad, and either in the role of volunteer or in patriotic response to the selective service call.

Each and every one of them has offered everything to his country, to which he has given the full measure of his devotion. All have met the supreme test of citizenship, and we, for whom they faced with fortitude the hardships of service and mayhap the steel of a treacherous and unrelenting foe, are proud of them, and consider it an honor to cheer them, to grasp their hands and to pay our tribute to their valor.

This greeting, therefore, is not alone for the boys of the One Hundred Twenty-third and for others who happen to share in the present festivities, but for all the sons of Rock and its vicinity who in any manner have taken part in the war or in preparation for war, under the flag and in their country's uniform.

Rock Island's sons have taken an honorable part in the Mexican, Civil, Spanish-American and the World wars. Four generations have been thus put to the test and none has been found wanting. The last ordeal has been the most severe of all, for it has involved a journey of thousands of miles across hostile seas to be pitted against an enemy of unexampled ferocity and armed with death dealing devices more terrible than ever before were employed. The struggle was for the ultimate protection of America, but it was waged on foreign soil, for the immediate relief of foreign peoples and partly under foreign leadership. It called for the highest type of fortitude and courage.

Americans, new to the experience, were put by the side of men long trained to arms and hardened by years of experience under fire. They proved their courage second to none and their fighting qualities unequaled by the best that other nations could offer. Our sons and brothers have lived up to the best American traditions, than which none on earth is higher or more inspiring.

In welcoming those who have returned we do not forget those who remained behind, martyrs to the cause. They always shall be held in grateful and reverent remembrance.

